Module 4 Intro Video Transcript

Narrator: Let's look at a scene in an early childhood environment in which the teachers, like all of us, face difficult behaviors and at times respond in ways that don't help the child learn more positive behaviors.

Miss Leslie: Joshua, you don't have to go to sleep, but you do have to stay on your mat. It's time to rest and relax. Playing quiet is not a choice. Joshua, turn back around the other way and go lay on your bed. Look at me. Wyatt is trying to rest also. You don't wanna mess with him. Wyatt is trying to rest, Joshua. He doesn't wanna play. All right, Joshua, do we need to help you get on your bed?

Joshua: (screaming) No! Noooooo!

Miss Debbie: Tell Miss Leslie what you want.

Joshua: No.

Miss Leslie: I'm not going to come back over there, Joshua, if you're kicking Miss Debbie. If you would like me to come back over there you need to ask.

Joshua: No.

Narrator: We'll take another look at this sequence at the end of the program, to examine what might be done in future situations like this to help the child learn more positive behaviors. Meanwhile, let's begin answering the question, "What is challenging behavior?"

Almost all children who have trouble controlling their behavior can learn new, more effective ways of taking part in school activities and playing with their friends. A child often shows dramatic improvements in his behavior when he learns how to use his words or control his impulses. But, in order to have a chance to learn and use these new skills, a child has to be involved with adults who are committed to helping him.

A recent study conducted by Yale University indicated that over 5,000 children were expelled from preschool in one year. This expulsion rate is more than three times that of children in kindergarten through the twelfth grade. The study also described as many as one in every ten children as having a "serious behavioral problem." Helping these children can be hard work. Programs that expel young children often feel they can't help those few children using difficult behaviors while still meeting the needs of other children in the classroom. But the fact is, as a qualified teacher, you can help these children. You may not realize that you already have many of the skills needed to help children using challenging behaviors.

Tom Lottman: Teachers often times faced with challenging behaviors, there first reaction is, "I'm not prepared to deal with this. I don't have the training to deal with this." When, in reality, if she simply reflected on the skills that she does have, I think that's the really key point is that ability to really stop, and do some self reflection and take a look at "What am I really good at?" and maybe that "I'm really

good at anticipating what the triggers are for that behavior." Well, that's going to really give me some good warning, you know, I may not exactly know what to do about that, but I can learn then to become intentional about some kind of intervention at that point. So, I think, you know, really reflecting and developing an awareness of what skills you do have is the first step to realizing that you might be able to develop the confidence and competence to deal with the challenging behaviors.

Boy: Mine! (screaming)

Narrator: Dealing with challenging behaviors is a normal part of dealing with some teachers' jobs. Most children will, at times, use difficult behaviors as they try out different ways of interacting with the world around them, or as they adapt to difficult situations like a family move, parental separation, a new sibling, recent changes in the classroom, or other major events in their lives.

Usually children adapt quickly and stop using behaviors that aren't the most effective in helping them get what they want or need. But sometimes a child doesn't stop using challenging behaviors. Without help, this child's behavior will likely limit his ability to learn and to grow. Determining the difference between behavior that is difficult but likely to improve and behavior that is challenging and likely to require intervention comes with experience.

The description of challenging behavior that is used by some child development experts cited in the book, "Challenging Behavior in Young Children", by Barbara Kaiser and Judy Sklar Rasminsky, has three components. Challenging behavior is defined as any behavior that interferes with children's learning, development and successful play; is harmful to the child, other children, or adults; puts a child at high risk for later social problems or school failure. Aggressive behavior like hitting, hair pulling, or biting can be challenging in all three ways. That's why a child who hurts his friends in order to get what he wants and doesn't respond as expected to your efforts to teach classroom rules, can turn your life upside down. These are the children who get your attention. But kids that don't disrupt class may also need help.

A child who is withdrawn or extremely shy is also at risk. She may not be likely to interfere with classroom learning or harm other children, but because she is not engaging in classroom activities and developing the skills she'll need to succeed, she could be at risk for later social problems or school failure. Children whose main challenge is that they don't participate in classroom activities are often overlooked and can easily get left behind. Behavior problems can stem from many causes. Before deciding to target a particular child for his challenging behavior, you should first look at your own teaching practices and learning environment to make sure you are encouraging positive interactions and experiences for all of the children. Each child is different and every group is unique. What has worked in the past may not be working now. Likewise, an activity that a group of children enjoys on a Wednesday may result in chaos on a Monday. Many problem behaviors can improve quickly with simple changes to the classroom's physical layout, rules, or transition strategies. If a child's behavior doesn't improve after you've evaluated and modified the program, you may need to work with the child's parents and others to develop a targeted set of strategies called a behavioral intervention plan. The input of early childhood educators to this plan is critical. Your observations of the child's behavior

and careful documentation of the potential causes and results of incidents will provide the raw material from which a plan can be developed.

Chris Kelly: I think next to a parent the teacher is really the link that, you know, builds the bridge between "this is something that is in our heads, still, or on paper as a plan" and what becomes the daily reality, the practical daily reality. What we do is what really makes the difference. You know, the old adage about, you know, when we talk about something and think about it and write about it is one thing, but when we actually do it and work the plan and go back to the development process and you know, that it doesn't need to be perfect the first time – that it is a work in progress and process that teachers are a really a critical part – second only to the parents. We're all in it.

Narrator: Teachers are an important influence and guide to a child's and well-being. If the child uses challenging behaviors, your relationship with the child may help you recognize why the behavior is occurring. When a child has difficulty learning new behaviors, one of your best tools in reaching out to the child will be the trust that lies at the heart of a positive relationship.

Marilou Hyson: Positive relationships between adults and children, teachers and children play an incredibly important role in supporting children's development and learning in all areas. And, in this case, if teachers take the time upfront to get to know a child, to really understand, express interest in, build a positive, friendly, caring relationship with that child, that's really like money in the bank. With that relationship, then, when things get tough, when you, the teacher, need to implement a plan that is focused on some difficult, some challenging behaviors, that that child's showing, you're doing…you're doing that implementation on top of this earlier positive relationship. It's going to make it easier for you and the child to move forward to that point.

Narrator: There isn't a formula that you can use to build relationships with young children. With some children communication seems natural and easy. With others you may need to be patient and willing to try different approaches until you find one that works.

Just as children are different from one another, so are adults. Behavior that upsets one teacher may be acceptable to another. Some behaviors that the teacher won't allow in the classroom may be encouraged at home. For a child, this difference in adult expectations can be confusing. For you and the child, the confusion about what's acceptable in school can be a source of frustration. The child may continually push your buttons with behaviors that you don't understand.

Teacher: Page, can you do me a favor? That really hurt my ears –

Girl: Me too

Teacher: - when you were screaming. Did it hurt your ears? Page do you think you can be a friend? Put your listening ears on, OK? And do you think you can put your hands in your lap and wait your turn for me? Oh, thank you. Thank you, you're a good friend. (Teacher speaks to another child)

Narrator: One way to harness the frustration and emotional energy that you may feel when a child disrupts your class is to acknowledge the child as soon as she uses a more positive behavior.

Teacher: Page! Thanks for waiting, now it's your turn! What did you do today?

Narrator: The characteristics of a child that lead to a challenging behavior can also be characteristics that, when channeled appropriately, will ultimately make the child successful. For example, a child with challenging behaviors may possess initiative, perseverance, an ability to lead, or even strong problem solving skills. When a child is displaying challenging behaviors, take some time to list the child's positive traits. With some effort, a teacher should be able to find likeable qualities in every child.

Nefertiti K. Bruce: One of the things that I encourage teachers to do is not to think about it while you're in that moment – but think about it when you have more quiet time, so maybe before the children start their day, stop for a moment, picture that child, and replay his or her day. At it's at that part when you may start to think, "Well, I've been really missing some things." Because when you're dealing with children that have challenging behaviors, the best way to start is thinking about what they do well. So one of the things, again, I suggest, start in the morning, replay that child's day, picture that child in your mind, and do it at that point, or do it maybe even in your quiet moments after they've gone home. It's going to be really tough to do it while you're interacting with those behaviors so try to do it in your quiet moments, before the day starts, or when the day ends.

Narrator: Finding a child's strengths will be helpful, but it's also a good idea to reflect on your own feelings and motivations to figure out why you respond strongly to a child's behavior. You might ask yourself, "Why did I decide to teach young children? What behaviors did my parents consider acceptable and unacceptable when I was a child? Did I have teachers that I admired? How did those teachers react to challenging behaviors in the classroom?" You may be surprised at what you learn about yourself when you look closely at beliefs you took for granted. Also, understanding why you feel the way you do, may help you control your responses when children use behaviors that normally upset you.

Luis Hernandez: Actually, in our profession, we really have to start always within ourselves. "What are my values? What are my beliefs? And what it's __ to carry my professional work?" And that it cuts across whether it's curriculum, whether it's assessment, but certainly about our relationship with individual children and families. So I have to double check a lot of those issues. Part of that belief system certainly is going to be about "How do I really feel about particular children?" In our field, we always think that, "All children are equal and I'm gonna love 'em all." But in reality, there are certain, you know, personality quirks that can get to us and really challenge us, really my individual relationship with a child. "What is it that bothers me about this particular child or even the family?" So it becomes one that is challenging. "What is it about me that creates a conflict, creates a barrier, for a better relationship with a child?" So the internal work that we do as professionals is deep. It's not a just a superficial level of like and not like, but it really is. Is it something that is deeper within my, again, my own culture, my beliefs, my values?

Narrator: Now let's take another look at the challenging behavior you viewed at the beginning of the program.

Joshua: No!

Miss Debbie: Tell Miss Leslie what you want.

Joshua: No.

Miss Leslie: I'm not going to come back over there, Joshua, if you're kicking Miss Debbie.

Narrator: What do you think the teacher might have done differently? Here are some responses that might have worked: 1) Ignore the behavior as long as the other children are not affected. 2) Let the child do another quiet activity while the other children nap. 3) Give the child clear but limited choices to empower the child to problem solve.

Miss Leslie: Joshua, you're not answering the question. Do you want me, or Miss Debbie?

Joshua: Hmmm… Debbie?

Miss Leslie: Come on.

Joshua: You. I want you.

Miss Leslie: Then come right over here.

Narrator: The teachers working with this child realized that they often told him what they shouldn't be doing, but left out what his choices actually were. Once they adjusted their strategy, they saw a dramatic improvement.

CSEFEL. (2006). Csefel: Center on the social and emotional foundations for early learning. Retrieved from http://csefel.vanderbilt.edu/resources/training_preschool.html